DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 424 056 RC 021 705

AUTHOR Itin, Christian
TITLE The Seventh Generation in Adventure Therapy.
PUB DATE 1998-00-00
NOTE 12p.; In: Exploring the Boundaries of Adventure Therapy: International Perspectives. Proceedings of the International Adventure Therapy Conference (1st, Perth, Australia, July 1997); see RC 021 699.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Experiential Learning; *Hypnosis; *Language Usage; Metaphors; *Psychoeducational Methods; Therapy; *Transfer of Training
IDENTIFIERS *Adventure Therapy; Erickson (Milton H)

ABSTRACT

Hypnotic language provides a powerful tool for the transfer of learning in adventure therapy. It allows the therapeutic adventure practitioner to use the client's experiential language to enhance the isomorphic connections of the adventure activity and to draw upon and develop the client's unconscious resources to support client goals. This paper provides a basic outline of hypnotic language and examples of its use in adventure therapy. An introduction explains hypnotic language within the context of Erickson's model of psychotherapy and view of the unconscious as a place of untapped resources and strength. The basic model of Ericksonian hypnosis involves three stages: absorbing a person in an experience or activity, ratifying that absorption, and eliciting the person's inner resources to address the symptom or problem. Examples are given of practitioner language used in accomplishing each step, including statements of truisms to develop cooperative agreement between practitioner and client, permissive language that allows the client some choices, and language patterns that deliver suggestions and link them to the absorption process. A case example demonstrates how hypnotic language deepened a recovering addict's experience of the trust fall as a metaphor for letting go of resentment toward his father and receiving support from the group. (Contains 18 references.) (SV)

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13

The Seventh Generation in Adventure Therapy

By Christian Itin, MSW, Ph.D.

Abstract

This article introduces the seventh generation of facilitation in adventure-based experiential education. Hypnotic language forms the basis of this next generation and provides a powerful tool for the transfer of learning in adventure therapy. This next generation allows the therapeutic adventure practitioner to use the experiential language of the client to enhance the isomorphic connections of the adventure activity and to draw upon and develop the unconscious resources of the client to support the goals of the client. This article provides a basic outline of hypnotic language and examples of its use in adventure therapy.

Introduction

The field of adventure therapy has undergone continual evolution in the processes we have used to enhance the transfer of learning (Bacon, 1983; Gass, 1995). The most profound evolution took place as we began to consciously use metaphor in the introduction of the activities that serve as the vehicle for our work (Bacon, 1983). Most of our understanding of the metaphoric introduction to adventure activities can be linked to the work of Dr. Milton H. Erickson (Bacon 1983; Gass 1991; Itin, 1993). However, most practitioners[1] in the field of adventure therapy are unaware that Ericksonian metaphor is rooted in hypnosis and hypnotic language. Priest and Gass (1995) have suggested a six generational model for understanding the evolution of the facilitation processes in adventure-based practice. Itin (1995) introduced the seventh generation as the use of hypnotic language (See Figure 1).

[1] Practitioners for the purposes of this article refer to anyone using adventure-base experiential education as a part of a process directed at therapeutic change. It may include those who consider themselves adventure therapists, adventure-based counselors, wilderness therapists, instructors, or related titles.

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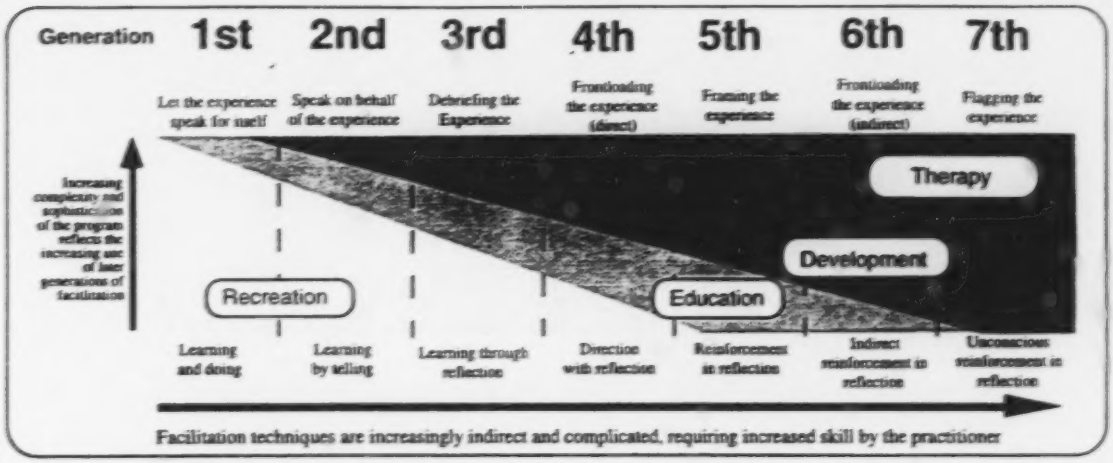

Figure 1. Seven Generations of Facilitation adapted from Priest and Gass.

This paper further explores the use of hypnotic language in adventure therapy. The basic components of hypnotic language and their place within an Ericksonian approach will be explored. Consideration will be given to using hypnotic language as a means of strengthen metaphoric connections and enhancing the change process in adventure therapy.

There are many misconceptions about hypnosis, from it being a stage performance to it imposing commands upon others. Hypnosis is best understood as an intentional process in which a person is helped to access a natural state of trance. At the most basic level a trance is simply the absorption of a person in an experience, feeling, thought, or event (Geary, 1994; Erickson, 1992). Those involved in adventure experiences will understand the trance state that naturally develops when engaged in an adventure activity. Remember a time when you have skied (or snowboarded) fresh powder, caught a wave, been rock climbing, or paddling a stretch of river and the time appears to disappear, you don't hear what is going on around you. Or perhaps you are so focused on the activity that every movement you make is crystal clear, a smooth fluid motion. This is a natural state of trance. When you are so involved in the activity that the awareness of what else is going one fades away or your experience of the event becomes so intense.

Hypnotic language becomes a tool for increasing this natural absorption in the activity. When a person enters a state of trance the conscious mind becomes absorbed in the experience so that the unconscious mind is more accessible or available (Geary, 1994; Erickson, 1992). In trance a person is more open to the learning available on a conscious and unconscious level (Zeig, 1992b).

Within an adventure therapy context, clients often become naturally absorbed in an activity (such as climbing, being on a ropes course, solving a problem, or even reflecting on a solo). The use of hypnotic language can help the client to increase the natural absorption or trance that a client may be experiencing during an activity. This increased absorption allows the client to be more open to the learnings at a conscious and unconscious level. It allows the client to be more open to the direct and indirect learnings available in the activity. It also allows the practitioner to speak more directly to the unconscious and encourage healthy action by the unconscious. Therapeutic hypnosis helps guide a person in the direction of trance, for therapeutic change.

Ericksonian hypnosis must be understood within the context of Ericksonian psychotherapy. Itin (1993) introduced a model developed by Jeffery Zeig for

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understanding the Ericksonian process. Figure 2 presents this model for the reader. The heart of this model is understanding the therapy process as an exchange of gifts between clients and the therapist. The client presents the gift of the problem or exhibits the problem behaviors. The therapist must receive this gift and present a gift in exchange that is the solution to the problem. Resistance for example in an Ericksonian process is not a problem, rather it is a gift of information and therapist must present a solution that will be received. Tailoring (making the intervention unique to the client) and giftwrapping (presenting the solution in a way that is unique to the client) are essential components in the gift giving process. Ericksonian hypnosis fits into this model in that it emphasizes utilizing the clients own language and permissive language (language that encourages client choice). The therapist builds on the client's strengths and natural ability to enter trance. The trance is a part of the gift giving process and it is a method for increasing the chance that the gift will be received.

A final piece that must be understood about Ericksonian psychotherapy is the conceptualization of the unconscious which trance taps into. Unlike psychodynamic conceptualizations of the unconscious being a repository of repressed memories, Ericksonian psychotherapy views the unconscious as a place of untapped resources and strength (Ewen, 1998). Utilizing trance and hypnotic language allows a therapist to help clients tap into the unconscious resources that can used by the client to make the changes sought.

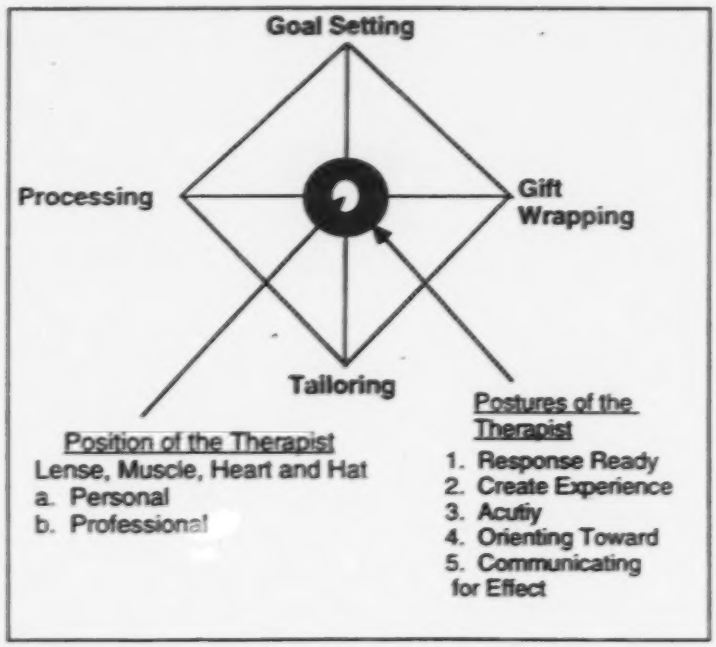

Figure 2. Zeig's Model of Ericksonian Psychotherapy.

An Introduction to Hypnotic Language

The basic model of Ericksonian hypnosis involves the "ARE" model (see Figure 3). The process involves absorbing a person in an experience, ratifying that absorption, and eliciting the resources of the client to address problematic situations. The absorption of the client in a story, memory, perception, sensation, hypnotic phenomenon, or experience is accomplished by first developing a "Yes Set" within the person. The "Yes Set" is a way to build cooperation and demonstrate respect for a client. It is based on the premise that once you begin to get a person saying yes it tends to continue (Geary, 1994). The "Yes Set" is developed initially by utilizing "truisms." Truisms are statements that are necessarily true. Using truisms allows one to develop cooperative agreement with the client. These truisms are determined though the observation of the practitioner and the utilization of the minimal cues that the client provides as to their experience (Itin, 1993, Zeig, 1992). As the practitioner observes the client in their experience these observations are shared. Truisms can be divided into two primary forms, those that are absolutes and those that are possible (see Figure 4). It is impossible for a client to answer no to an absolute and it is almost certainly possible to answer yes to a possible truism. A client can not deny that they are breathing or on the ground and they probably could hear sounds or notice their breath. The client will likely answer yes to possibilities because of the permissive language. Permissiveness is one of the hallmarks of Ericksonian hypnosis. Words like "can, may, and might" allow the client to choose if they will notice those things. However, the client can't deny that they could choose to pay attention to those truisms.

1. Absorb - the person in a story, memory, perception, sensation, hypnotic phenomenon, or experience.
2. Ratify- what the person is doing, support their absorption in an event.
3. Elicit - resources from within the person to be brought to bear on addressing the symptom or the problem

Figure 3. The "ARE" Model of Hypnotic Induction

1. Absolutes: Statements are experientially certain.
Examples:
"You are breathing."
"You are standing on the ground."
2. Possibilities: Statements that suggest possibility through permissive language (Geary, 1994).
Examples:
"You can hear the sounds around you."
"You may notice the change your breathing."
"You might notice the touch of hands on your body."

Figure 4. Types of Truisms in Hypnotic Language

Truisms can also be focused on two experiential arenas (see Figure 5). The "here and now" statements help the client to become absorbed in the current process that is going on or their experience of the process. The "there" statements begin to draw upon the internal

resources of the person to overcome the problem. Truisms can also be focused at three different levels of specificity (see Figure 6). Staying at the most general level prevents one from getting a "no" from a client. It also allows the client to experience what ever they are experiencing with little influence from the practitioner. The more specific one becomes in truisms made the greater the chance that one will not be absorbing the client in their "truth." The specificity comes from using the experiential language of the client, their words, phrases, experiences, feelings, etc. However, the more specific one is the more the client will become absorbed. The more the practitioner is with the client's experience, the more the client will focus on the suggestions of the practitioner.

1. Here and Now: Statements about events that are, or possibly are occurring in the present.
Examples:
"You are on a the high beam."
"You might notice the breeze in the trees."
2. There: Statements that comment on memory or fantasy (Geary, 1994).
Examples:
"You can remember a time when you felt less scared."
"You might imagine yourself accomplishing this."

Figure 5. Experiential Arenas of Hypnotic Language

1. Level 1 -- Most general
Visual (V) -- Images. -- "You can see the sights." "You might be aware of images."
Tactile/Somatic (T/S) -- Feelings/sensations. -- "You can notice the feelings."
Auditory (A) -- Sounds. -- "You might hear sounds."
Olfactory/Gustatory (O/G) -- Taste and smells. -- "You might perceive some smells."
2. Level 2 -- More specific
V -- Colors, shading, light (bright and dark), shapes, objects, movement, distance/direction. -- "You can see the colors and notice the movement."
A -- Volume, pitch, tone, timber, intensity, quality, relationship, tempo, rhythm. -- "You notice the rhythms of the sounds."
T/S -- Temperature, texture, pressure, moist, dry, movement, hard or soft, weight. -- "You feel the temperature of the air on your body."
O/G -- Bitter, sweet, sour, salty. -- "You smell the sweetness in the air."
3. Level 3 -- Most specific
Specifics from the clients experience (Geary, 1994).
V -- "You can see your red Honda."
A -- "You might remember the sounds of the gears on the bike."
T/S -- "You feel the harness around your waist and you legs."
O/G -- "You can taste the salt water in your mouth."

Figure 6. Levels of Specificity in Hypnotic Language

The ability to assess the client's needs, motivations, goals for change, and knowledge of past experiences greatly enhances the practitioner's ability to be specific in the level of truisms. Furthermore, It is the practitioner's skill in observing the client and picking up the minimal cues that are shared that allow the practitioner to enhance the client's absorption in an experience. The "ARE" model assumes the basic skills of observation

and prediction discussed in Zeig (1992) and Itin (1993). Without these basic skills the practitioner is able to use the most general aspects of hypnotic language to help direct a client's absorption in an experiential activity. This general level will help a client to be absorbed in the activity, but will lack the fullness of more specific observations.

The ratification of a client's experience is based on giving positive reinforcement as the client works on developing the absorption in the experience. This may include noticing as a client becomes absorb, perhaps after a statement such as "you can notice breath" the client takes a deep breath the practitioner say's "that's right" or "good," reinforcing the clients absorption in the experience. The ratification of the client's experience also reinforces the client's willingness to follow suggestions from the practitioner. The client's willingness to listen to the practitioner is crucial for the practitioner to elicit specific responses from the client.

The elicitation of responses or the suggestion of possible actions enables the practitioner to support the client in drawing upon and developing those unconscious resources for change that are needed. As the client becomes absorbed in the experience the unconscious is more open to suggestions. These suggestions are what help the client move in the direction of change they have indicated they wish to move in. The delivery of suggestions is accomplished primarily through he use of three linguistic patterns (see Figure 7). These linguistic patterns provide a powerful way of delivering suggestions and linking them to the absorption process. The linking to observation needs to make no sense logically (e.g., Since you are hearing my voice and are doing this activity, you can feel even more relaxed) (Geary 1994). Hearing my voice has nothing to do with being more relaxed and makes no sense logically (or on a conscious level). However, unconsciously the client is in a "yes set" and can notice all those things and can be more relaxed if they choose to.

1. Conjunction (and, but, etc.)
   "You might notice your breath as it goes in and out and you can take a deep breath."
2. Implied Causative (since, as, while, before, during, after etc.)
   "Since you are hearing my voice and are doing this activity, you can feel even more relaxed."
3. Cause/Effect (makes, causes, forces, etc.)(Geary, 1994).
   "You can notice the sounds as people move to support you, and it almost forces you to be more relaxed."

Figure 7. Linguistic Patterns in Hypnotic Language

The five elements of hypnotic language can be identified in the following example. This example demonstrates the general use of hypnotic language in the activity "Blade of Grass":[2]

[2] The blade of grass has also been referred to as wind in the willow or a trust circle. It involves an individual standing in the center of a group of people. The group supports the person as they fall back into the arms of the group. The group usually moves the person back and forth and around the inside of the circle. A complete description is available in Rohnke (1989).

> You are in the center of this circle and you can notice the sounds. You might notice your breath as it goes in and out (said in time with the person's breathing) and you can take a deep breath. That's right! When you're ready to fall you'll ask the group if you can trust them and when you've gotten a response you can trust, you'll count to three and fall. (Client does this.) And you notice the hands as they support you. You can notice the way that feels and you can allow yourself to relax. You can notice the sounds as people move to support you and it almost forces you to be more relaxed. And you might notice the pleasant thoughts that come and the feelings that they bring up. Since you are hearing my voice and are doing this activity, you can feel even more relaxed. And you can notice that you can be relaxed and stiff at the same time. Your feet are still on the ground, your arms are still crossed and you can notice being relaxed and trusting the group to support you. (And the process might continue in this way.)

In this example you can notice all the elements of hypnotic language. The elicitation in this example is a suggestion in the direction of relaxation and trust. The suggestions are both in the direction of trance as well as a therapeutic intent. In this example the therapeutic intent is relaxation and trust. The client is absorbed in the physical sensations of the process and ratified when they take a deep breath. This entire process seeks to deepen the client's experience of the activity and could be used to address specific issues of the client.

Therapeutic Application

Within the adventure-therapy process we are often interested in helping clients make some important changes in their lives. We use adventure activities for the purpose of helping clients to make these changes. Hypnotic language can help clients to become further absorbed in the activity and more open to the learning available. The metaphors inherent in an activity may be more available to the client's unconscious when the activity is flagged with hypnotic language (Itin, 1995).

While hypnotic language can be used to enhance the transfer of learning from the experience around a specific therapeutic goal. This therapeutic goal is best formed with the client, or an agreed upon goal of the program that client is participating in. Hypnotic language allows an activity to become more isomorphic for the client by using their own experiential language and fully absorbing them in the activity. The activity is tailored and giftwrapped to the client's specific needs and way of processing the world (Itin, 1993; Zeig, 1992) It also allows the client to draw upon and develop unconscious resources that can be used to support the change process. This ability to help develop internal resources that can be drawn upon to effect change is extremely consistent with the strength-based and resource development aspects of adventure therapy.

An example of utilizing hypnotic language to deepen a client's experience of an activity and uses it to work on specific client issues is available through the trust fall.[3] The trust fall is often introduced metaphorically with a frame of letting go of something and leaving it behind as the person falls into the support of the group (Bacon, 1983). In the

[3] The trust fall involves a person standing approximately four feet off the ground. The group forms a human net with their arms with the person will then fall into. A complete description can be found in Rohnke (1989).

treatment context this is often letting go of a behavior, attitude, or belief that is blocking or hindering treatment. Additionally the client is often asked to choose a healthy behavior or a behavior that will help them in treatment to replace what they are letting go of. The client is often asked to share both what they are letting go of and what they want to replace this with before doing the trust fall. This provides the practitioner with much of the experiential language of the clients and some of the specifics of the client's experience. The following is an example of utilizing hypnotic language to deepen the metaphor of letting go.

In this example the client is a recovering addict who is choosing to let go of the resentment toward his father for not being available to him as a child. He has identified feeling abandoned by his father because of his father's drinking. His resentment has been expressed in a fear of intimacy and a reluctance to allow others to support him. He has chosen to replace this resentment with forgiveness. The specifics of the identification of this goal and readiness to work at this level must be understood as resulting from an ongoing assessment process. This level of working with the client comes after several sessions working with the client in which these issues have been explored with the client in both a group and individual level. Material has been gathered from peers and their experience of the client as well as treatment staff and their experience of the client.

> John, as you stand on the platform and the group gets ready to support you, you can take some time to think about what it might mean to give up the resentment toward your father. You might notice the sounds of the group lining up, and my voice as I talk to you, but you can still focus on what you have chosen to give up. You may pay attention to your breath and the memories that come and you can really get in touch with that resentment. You might allow yourself to remember what it felt like when your father drank. You might allow those memories to come and the times you felt abandoned. That's right John. You can allow whatever emotions to come to the surface. And John as you get ready to let go of the resentment and fall into the support of this group, you can begin to think about what it will be like to feel forgiveness. It might be difficult to let go of the resentment and fall into the support that is here for you. You might imagine yourself no longer being resentful and allowing others to support you. As you forgive you may be able to allow others to be there for you. When you are ready you will check with your "sponsor" and count to three before falling. When you are really ready to let go of that resentment, you will let go. (After the client has fallen the practitioner should encourage the group to cradle the client and additional hypnotic language can be used support the changes the client has indicated they want to make.)
>
> John you might notice the support of the group, notice that there are hands supporting your back and your legs and your head. As you are supported, you might allow yourself to accept this support, and as you accept this support you can accept the forgiveness. You can allow yourself to be supported in forgiveness. You might notice what it feels like to be supported in this way. (This process might continue for a few moments and then the client can be stood up.)[4]

[4] A verbatim of this introduction was first published in Bacon (1983).

This example illustrates utilizing the client's language and posing permissive questions in the direction of the client's goal. The client is encouraged to move inward and to focus on the memories that come up as they think of the resentment. The client is encouraged to experience the emotions of the past experiences as they begin to let go of the resentment. Finally the client is encouraged to move toward the forgiveness and how this might allow him to let others support him. This use of hypnotic language reinforces the metaphor of the activity and helps build the isomorphism of that experience. In theory, if the isomormism of the activity is increased then the transference of the activity should also be increased (Gass, 1991).

The client has both an internal and external experience of letting go of resentment and of receiving and letting in support. The on going process of assessment characteristic of good therapeutic work would encourage the practitioner to explore if John is continuing to allow others to support him. If John demonstrates more acceptance of support in future actions then the practitioner will know that there has been a transfer of learning. Furthermore, the practitioner can reinforce the subtle changes that are observed from the activity. Future activities (or other therapeutic sessions) are used to build upon this experience. The resources that were developed (the ability to forgive and to accept support) are available to the client in other situations. The practitioner can help the client to remember and draw upon those resources on both the conscious and unconscious level. If changes are not observed the use of hypnotic language has planed the seeds and oriented the client toward the goal they have indicated they want to work on. Future activities can continue to reinforce this direction.

A second area that hypnotic language can be extremely helpful for clients are in those situations where the client is absorbed in fears (such as on a ropes course or while rock climbing). The use of hypnotic language can ground the client and help them to find the internal resources to move through the activity. By accessing unconscious resources within the person the client can have an experience of moving through the fear. They need not be paralyzed by the fear or prevented from taking action. Often clients have a profound fear of the unknown and this fear prevents them from taking the steps they must take in their recovery (healing). Hypnotic language can help a client to take manageable steps and to build on their own inner resources.

Conclusions

Much of the work to date in adventure therapy has focused on helping clients become more conscious of the process and the transfer of learning. The use of hypnotic language and hypnotic methods are more directed toward the unconscious support and reinforce of the clients inner strength. As we become more developed as a profession the techniques we utilize will also become more developed. Hypnotic language requires more training and development on the part of the therapist then many of the other techniques we use.

Clearly there are ethical considerations with any facilitation method. This method because of its work with the unconscious and with suggestions directed toward the unconscious demands that practitioners are clearly grounded in the ethics of the profession. The Ethical Guidelines of the Therapeutic Adventure Professional Group clearly state that practitioners should only use methods with which they are competent. Furthermore, the guidelines make it clear that practitioners should only practice in areas in which they have competence. If a practitioner is truly engaged in therapy and wants to

fully use hypnosis, they should consider specific training in hypnosis. However, if the practitioner is focused on the best interests of the client and is receiving proper supervision, hypnotic language can be a useful tool. The key is to use the language in a manner that is consistent with one's e level of training and competence. Staying at a general level directed more toward therapeutic change (moving in a healthy direction) rather then toward therapy (moving toward meta change) will allow a practitioner remain ethical (Itin, 1993b)

This article provides a beginning framework from which to understand and apply hypnotic language in an adventure therapy context. The use of this language can help clients by providing them with direction at the unconscious level for them to move in the direction that they want to move. These markers can help in building stronger isomorphic links thereby increasing the transfer of learning from the adventure experience to the client's everyday life. It is hoped that the adventure therapist will consider the application of this facilitation (giftwrapping) technique in their work with clients.

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